

A Pink Sheep

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Jared and his family are going to the petting zoo. Jared is nervous. What if one of the animals bites him?

“The animals won’t bite as long as you are nice to them,” Mom says.

“I’m always nice to animals,” says Jared.

When they get to the zoo, he sees all kinds of animals. There are chickens and lambs. There is a goat and a cow.

Jared puts a nickel in a dispenser. A big handful of animal pellets come out. They smell like dirty socks. He holds the pellets up to a goat, and the goat grabs them with his tongue. The tongue is soft and it tickles Jared’s hand.

“Ah!” Jared yells and jumps back from the goat.

“Bleeeeeeeet” says the goat. He wants more food. Jared doesn’t have any more food to give him.

He keeps walking backward until he feels something fluffy against the back of his legs. A whole flock of sheep are standing together.

“Baaaaaaah!” they say. They are looking for food from Jared, too.

One of the sheep is a little different from the others. It’s a black sheep with a

pink face.

Jared walks up to the funny animal.

“Why do you have a pink face?” he asks the sheep.

“Why do you have a brown face?” the sheep asks.

“Because that’s the color of my skin!” Jared says. Suddenly, he realizes the sheep is talking. “Hey! You can talk!”

“Only you can hear me,” says the sheep. “And only you can see my true color.”

At this, the sheep magically turns bright pink.

“Let me introduce myself. I am Gael, the sacred pink sheep. I live in shame.”

“Why are you ashamed? You are beautiful!”

“I cannot show my true self to the other sheep,” he says.

“Why not?”

“They won’t accept me with my pink face.” says Gael.

Jared couldn’t believe this. The other sheep seemed nice—just hungry.

He takes a nickel from his pocket. He gets more smelly treats and walks over to the other sheep.

“Little boy, have you brought us food?” asks the biggest sheep.

“I have,” says Jared. “But first, I have a question.”

“You can address it to me,” says the biggest sheep. “I am the leader, Conrad.”

“Conrad, are any of you secretly...pink?”

All the sheep begin to laugh.

“Clearly we are not pink, silly boy” says Conrad. “You can see our colors.”

“What if one of your sheep was *secretly* pink?”

“Secretly pink? We would never accept him! He would be a black sheep,” Conrad laughed at his own joke.

Gael, the pink sheep, is standing alone on the other side of the petting zoo. He hears every word Conrad says. He begins to cry pink tears. As the tears fall to the ground, little, pink flowers began to grow.

“Look!” says Jared, pointing. “There is your pink sheep. Making flowers grow!”

“Ohhh!” all the other sheep gasp. “They are beautiful.”

Jared walks to Gael. He picks one of the flowers. Conrad the sheep eats the flower from Jared's hand.

"This is delicious!" he exclaims.

All around Gael, beautiful pink flowers have begun to grow. Gael himself is glowing pink.

"Behold!" says Gael. "My true form!"

Conrad stares at Gael for a very long time.

"I accept you," Conrad finally says. "I wasn't right to think there's something wrong with a pink sheep. You have made the most beautiful flowers with your magic."

"Thank you, Jared," says Gael. "I have a family again."

"Jared!!" Jared's mother is calling for him. "It's time to go home!"

"I have to go!" Jared says, running back to his mother.

"So, did you enjoy feeding the animals at the petting zoo today?" Mom asks.

"More than you'll ever know!" said Jared.

In his hand is a beautiful pink flower. Jared knows he will always remember this day. He will never forget that being different can also be beautiful.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where do Jared and his family go in the story?

- A the shopping mall
- B the petting zoo
- C the aquarium

2. What problem does Gael the sheep face?

- A He thinks the other sheep won't accept his pink face.
- B When he cries, pink flowers grow from where his tears fall.
- C He does not get enough food because no one feeds pink sheep.

3. Gael is a magical sheep. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A Conrad the sheep thinks the little, pink flowers are delicious.
- B When Gael cries, pink flowers grow from where his tears fall.
- C Gael lives in shame and cannot show his true self to the other sheep.

4. Read the following sentences: "Secretly pink? We would never accept him! He would be a black sheep," Conrad laughed at his own joke. Gael, the pink sheep, is standing alone on the other side of the petting zoo. He hears every word Conrad says. He begins to cry pink tears."

Based on this information, how does Gael feel?

- A proud that he is pink and different from others
- B hungry for more animal pellets from Jared
- C sad that the sheep would not accept him

5. What is the main message of this story?

- A Being different can also be beautiful.
- B Trips to the petting zoo can teach you things.
- C Pink sheep are better than white sheep.

6. Read the following sentences:

"Look!" says Jared, pointing. "There is your pink sheep. Making flowers grow!"

"Ohhh!" all the other sheep **gasp**. "They are beautiful."

As used in the sentence, what does the word "**gasp**" mean?

- A run away in fear from something
- B make a noise from being surprised
- C make a noise in disgust

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Gael thinks the other sheep would reject him if they knew his true color, _____ he hides his true form from others.

- A but
- B like
- C so

8. What is Gael the sheep's true color?

9. What does Conrad say when Jared asks, "What if one of your sheep was *secretly* pink?"

10. How do Conrad's feelings towards a pink sheep change in the story? What makes his feelings change? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 410

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8. What is Gael the sheep's true color?

Suggested answer: Gael's true color is *pink*.

9. What does Conrad say when Jared asks, "What if one of your sheep was *secretly* pink?"

Suggested answer: Conrad says that they would never accept him. (Quoting directly from the passage is also fine.)

10. How do Conrad's feelings towards a pink sheep change in the story? What makes his feelings change? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. Students should indicate that at the beginning of the story, Conrad thinks a pink sheep would not be accepted, but at the end of the passage, Conrad accepts Gael as a pink sheep. Conrad's feelings change when he sees and tastes the flowers that Gael creates. Conrad realizes how beautiful they are and how good they taste. This makes Conrad recognize the beauty of Gael's uniqueness.